Architecting Serendipity
Designing Events That Spark Lasting Connections

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1

Pair & Share

1. Apply a proven framework for building purpose-driven networking experiences.

2. Design curated conversations and moments that spark genuine belonging.

3. Create a practical roadmap to transform events from simple gatherings into thriving, connected communities.

2

The New Purpose of Networking

Craving
Modern attendees desire genuine connections and fresh industry insights, not just small talk

Intentional Networking
Attendees want a new kind of networking that is purposeful and not random or transactional

Networking is a Priority
Over 51% of attendees said successful networking is a reason to return to an event

*Freeman Trends Report Summer 2025 on Networking

3

The Alignment Gap: Perception vs. Plan

- learn something new (61% of attendees) vs. 47% of organizers
- Identify contacts for idea sharing (58% of attendees) vs. 44% of organizers
- Identify potential collaboration 54% of attendees vs. 61% of organizers

4

The Serendipity Paradox: Planning for "Luck"

Serendipity
Serendipity is not an accident, it can be planned for

Intentional Design
Design experiences that lead to serendipitous connections

Serendipity + Intentional Design = High Networking Value

5

Mere Exposure: The Serendipity Accelerator

The ROI
Leveraging mere exposure accelerates like-minded connections to win over a loyal, raving attendee who can't wait to return.

The Challenge
Nearly 1 in 4 attendees (24%) feel anxious or skeptical when a session is explicitly labeled "networking".

Mere Exposure
The serendipity accelerator that leads to lasting connections.

Key Insight
Intentionally designing for increased mere exposure can create an environment conducive to meaningful interactions.
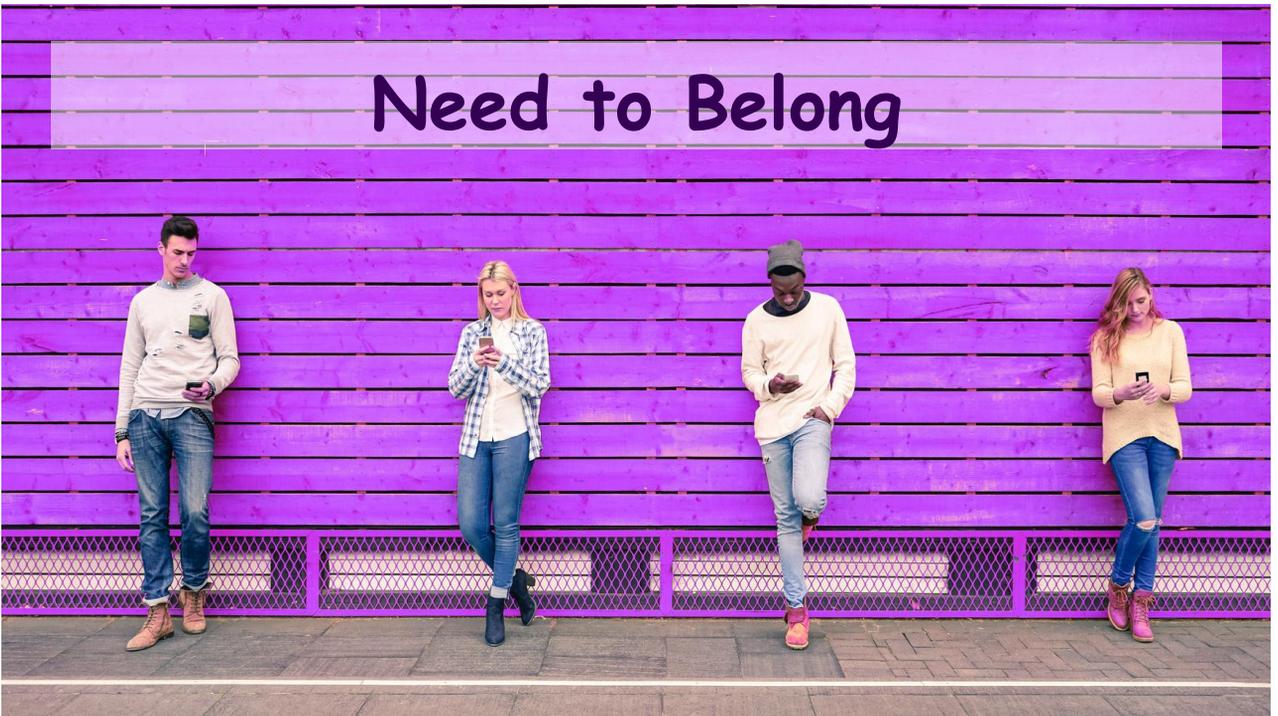
6

Make it Easy to find my tribe
Learning Tracks by problem to solve

7

"Unlikely Allies"

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HELLO
I AM...
Your mentor

9

Lots of First-timers
Daily Meetups

10

Leverage the Destination/Venue

11

Need to Belong

12

Share one idea you have for Infusing Serendipity into your event

13

Attendees Don't Want Small Talk. They Want Real Talk.

Networking anxiety
Nearly 1 in 4 attendees (24%) feel anxious or skeptical when a session is explicitly labeled 'networking'.
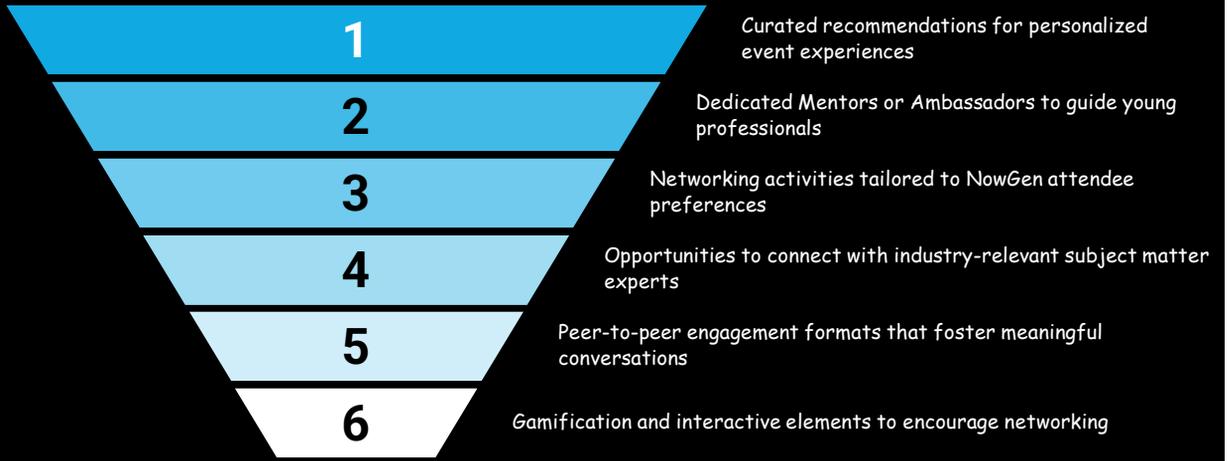
Higher for NowGen
This anxiety is even higher for NowGen attendees (28%).

Attendees are wary of 'networking' events, preferring more purpose-driven and structured interactions that avoid superficial small talk.

14

The NowGen Imperative & Connection Conundrum

1	Curated recommendations for personalized event experiences
2	Dedicated Mentors or Ambassadors to guide young professionals
3	Networking activities tailored to NowGen attendee preferences
4	Opportunities to connect with industry-relevant subject matter experts
5	Peer-to-peer engagement formats that foster meaningful conversations
6	Gamification and interactive elements to encourage networking

15

Facilitate Connecting

16

Purpose Multiplies Connection

The Formula	Purpose-Driven Formats	The Role of Experts
People + Place + Provisions x PURPOSE = Connection.	Attendees overwhelmingly prefer industry topic-specific discussions (51% of attendees). The key is providing industry-related prompts to start discussion (49%).	Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) are the most important contributors (63%), bringing purpose, credibility, and direction beyond surface-level talk.

17

17

Problem/challenge focused
Peer to Peer

18

Personalize & Prime (Pre-Event)

Opt-in Model

Use an opt-in model to connect attendees with experts and peers in advance.

Advance Connections

Pre-event connection drives on-site momentum and accelerates meaningful interactions.
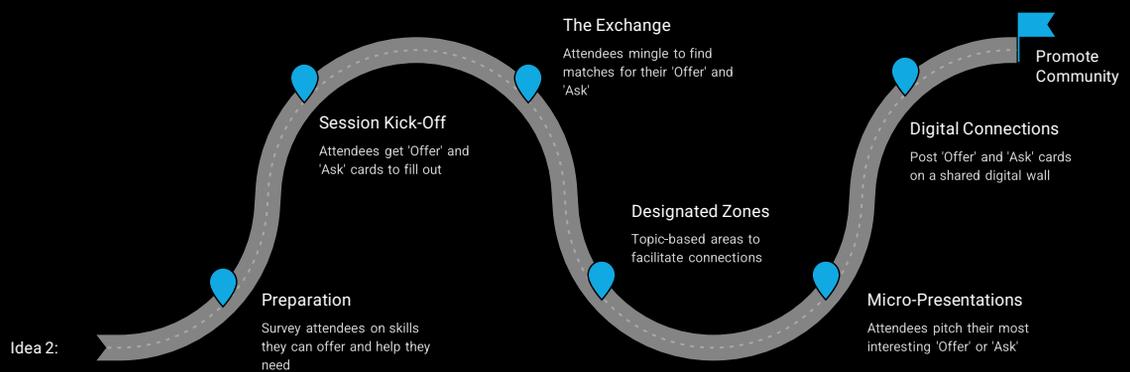
Curated Recommendations

Provide curated recommendations for attendees to connect with relevant experts and peers.
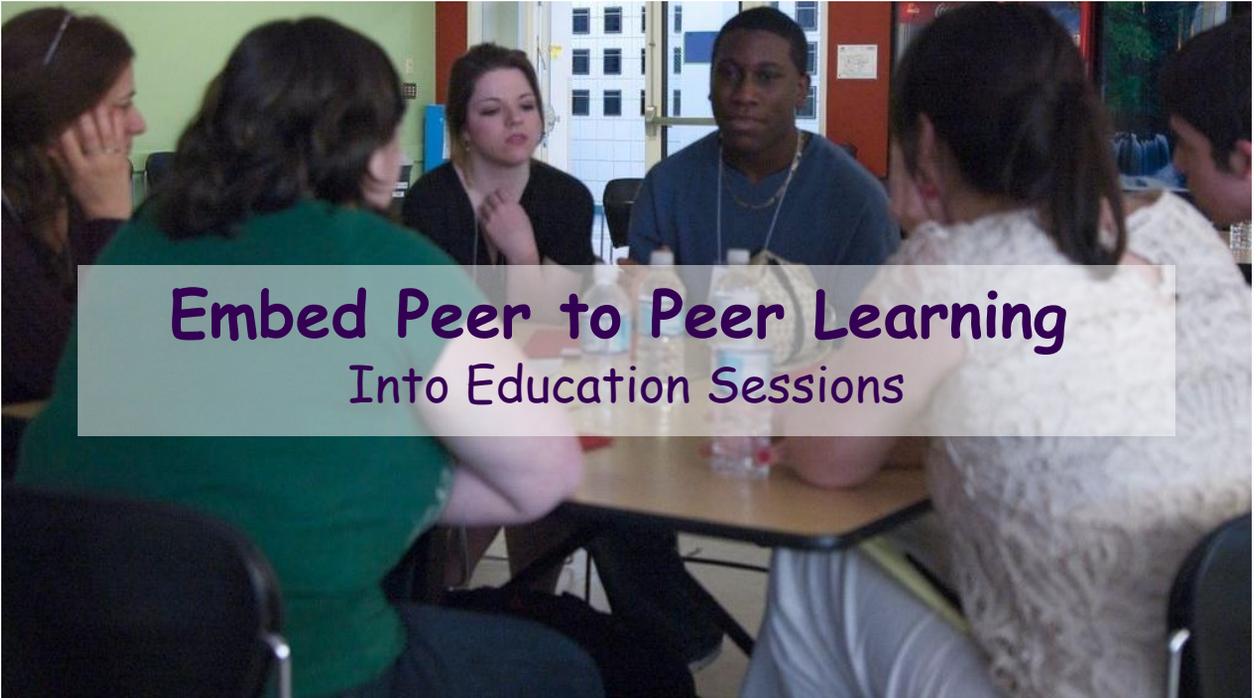
Mentor/Ambassador

Assign a Mentor or Ambassador to help attendees, especially the NowGen segment, navigate and connect.
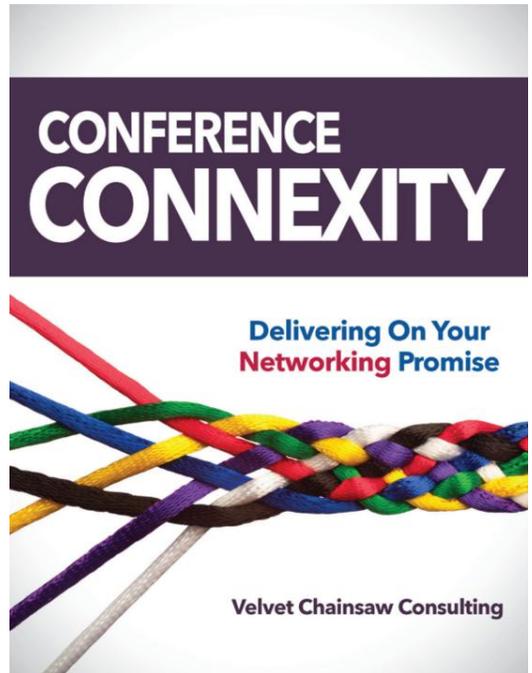
19

The Networker Marketplace

The Exchange
Attendees mingle to find matches for their 'Offer' and 'Ask'

Promote Community

Session Kick-Off
Attendees get 'Offer' and 'Ask' cards to fill out

Digital Connections
Post 'Offer' and 'Ask' cards on a shared digital wall

Designated Zones
Topic-based areas to facilitate connections

Preparation
Survey attendees on skills they can offer and help they need

Idea 2:

Micro-Presentations
Attendees pitch their most interesting 'Offer' or 'Ask'

20

Embed Peer to Peer Learning
Into Education Sessions

21

Deliver on
Belonging

22

23

Action Plan

Share an idea you plan to implement to transform your event into a thriving, connected community?

24

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25